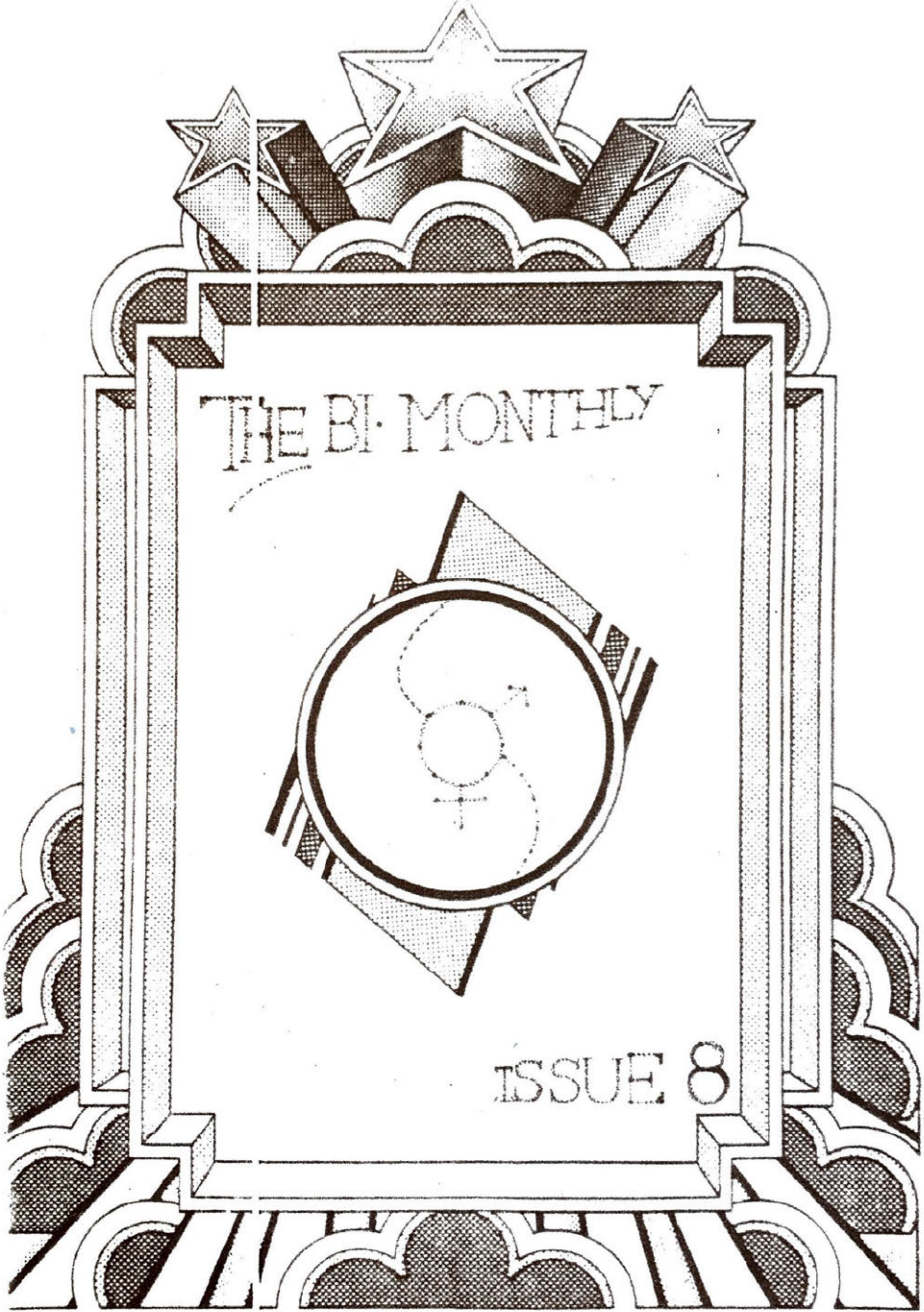
The Newsletter for bisexuals

50p



THE BI·MONTHLY

ISSUE 8

THE BI-MONTHLY

credits

Contributors to this issue;
David Smith, Jackie Roberts, Richard Sterne, Zaidie Parr, James Lewis, Joy Hibbert, Ellen Weissbuch, Mirjam Ulrich, and Kate Fearnley.
Thanks to: David Burkle and Matt Milne

The BI-MONTHLY was put together this issue by Julia Hobday and David Smith.

Cover design by Jo Cunningham and Gemma.

Individual articles in the BI-MONTHLY do not necessarily reflect the views of the collective, nor of the London Bisexual Group.

erratum

In our last issue (No.7) there was an error in the last paragraph of Draft Manifesto No. 2 The paragraph should have read......

As a group of people socialising , working and loving together and being aware of our own heterosexual feelings and able to mix inconspicuously in heterosexual society, as bisexuals we are in a unique position to challenge and work to change the sexism , racism , heterosexualism and class prejudice in our selves and others and we shall endevour to give each other the courage and support we need to do this to do this for ourselves , in our group and the world.

Anti-sexist Mens Newsletter

The ANTI SEXIST MENS NEWSLETTER (ASMN) exists to provide a means of exchange of news, ideas, thoughts, feelings & information for men who are challenging sexism and particularily for people who wish to find for men alternative roles to those which sociaty casts for them.

Single issue by post	80p
6 iss. subscription	£4.20

contact Anti Sexist Mens Newsletter
c/o 22a Oakfield St.
Roath
CARDIFF

Help Wanted

LBG wants help in collecting press cuttings relating to bisexuality. Articles, problem page letters, book reviews, cartoons etc.
Send to BM BI, LONDON, WC1N 3XX.

BANNED

Bisexual groups banned from Lesbian&Gay Centre

Bisexual groups have been banned from booking meeting space at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre. On Friday 1st March the Management Committee of the Centre decided that Centre policy was that Bisexuals are not Lesbian and Gay and are therefore not eligible to book rooms in the Centre. The London Bisexual Group had already booked the Centre for the 2nd Politics of Bisexuality Conference which will take place on Saturday and Sunday 13th and 14th April. The Management Committee considered that the contract had to be honoured and that the conference should go ahead.

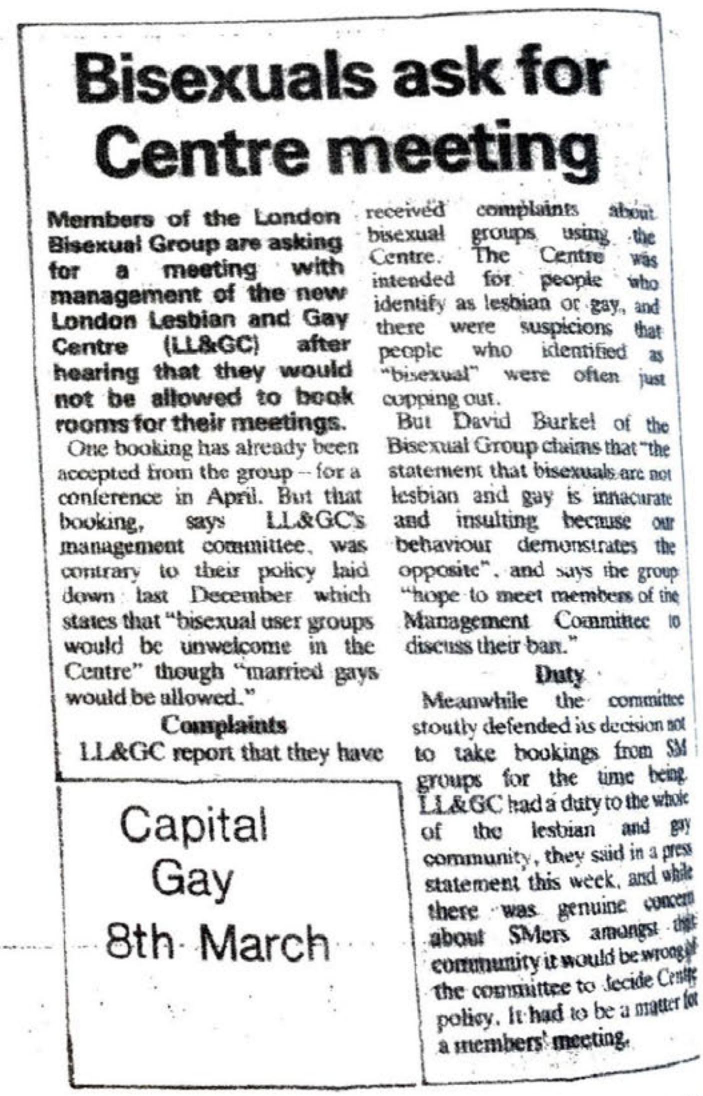
accusations

According to information we have received, the Management Committee was swayed by women members who expressed the view that bisexual men were likely to harass lesbians in the Centre and thus their presence was not desirable. The decision was also influenced by reports from women members of the Gay Youth Movement who claimed that they had been oppressed by six members of the London Bisexual Group (four men and two women) who met informally in the Coffee Bar of the Centre to plan the forthcoming Conference. These accusations are categorically denied by those who were present. In fact the members of the G.Y.M. spent over an hour making derisory comments at the expense of the Bisexual Group.

insulting

In a statement to Capital Gay David Burkle speaking on behalf of the London Bisexual Group said:

'We believe this decision is an example of the repressive, short-sighted, narrow-minded bigotry that gay people claim to be fighting. Surely the Management Committee can see that by using the Centre for our conference we are making a positive statement about our gayness.
In our view the statement that Bisexuals are not Lesbian and Gay is inaccurate and insulting because our behaviour patently demonstrates the opposite. Why does it have to be all or nothing? This decision brings into question the whole definition of the words 'lesbian' and 'gay'. How gay is gay? How lesbian is lesbian? Bisexuals are everywhere in the gay world but because of this ghetto mentality we are forced to undervalue and deny our bisexuality. The Centre should be welcoming everyone who chooses to question and explore their sexuality however they label themselves.'



Bisexuals ask for Centre meeting

Members of the London Bisexual Group are asking for a meeting with management of the new London Lesbian and Gay Centre (LL&GC) after hearing that they would not be allowed to book rooms for their meetings.

One booking has already been accepted from the group – for a conference in April. But that booking, says LL&GC's management committee, was contrary to their policy laid down last December which states that "bisexual user groups would be unwelcome in the Centre" though "married gays would be allowed."

Complaints

LL&GC report that they have received complaints about bisexual groups using the Centre. The Centre was intended for people who identify as lesbian or gay, and there were suspicions that people who identified as "bisexual" were often just copping out.

But David Burkel of the Bisexual Group claims that "the statement that bisexuals are not lesbian and gay is innacurate and insulting because our behaviour demonstrates the opposite", and says the group "hope to meet members of the Management Committee to discuss their ban."

Duty

Meanwhile the committee stoutly defended its decision not to take bookings from SM groups for the time being. LL&GC had a duty to the whole of the lesbian and gay community, they said in a press statement this week, and while there was genuine concern about SMers amongst th community it would be wrong of the committee to decide Centre policy. It had to be a matter for a members' meeting.

Capital
Gay
8th March

cont'd

BANNED...

Capital Gay covered the story in a short item on page 7, devoting only one short paragraph to David Burkle's statement. This contrasts strongly with a story in Capital Gay the previous week about the banning of S and M groups from the Centre. This story was featured on page 3 under a banner headline and seven paragraphs were devoted to comments from spokespersons from S and M groups.

The reasons given for banning S and M groups were similar to those for banning Bisexual groups. Wendy Craig, a member of the Management Committee, said that S and M groups were contentious and that there was a section of members, mostly women, who would disapprove of the groups meeting at the Centre. She also said: 'It's a temporary exclusion. We do not feel as a management committee it is up to us to make a policy decision on this...it is very important that it goes to an open meeting.'

No such concession was made on the banning of Bisexual groups. But once the membership of the Centre has reached 400 there will be General Meetings at which policy decisions will be made. There will also be elections for the Management Committee.

At a planning meeting of the London Bisexual Group it was hoped that significant numbers of bisexuals would take out full membership of the Centre as soon as possible. (Membership costs £15 for one year or £7 for the unwaged, OAP's, the under 24's and people with disabilities.

the letter

In the mean time a letter was sent to the Management Committee on behalf of the London Bisexual Group, the Edinburgh Bisexual Group, the Radical Lesbian/Gay-Identified Bisexual Network and Bi-monthly, requesting a meeting to discuss the ban.

The letter included the following comments:

Whilst we thank you for honouring the booking, we are nevertheless angered and hurt by the future ban and feel you are making a serious error of judgement. Please reconsider it urgently, bearing in mind;

i) It is sad and ironic that you have adopted the position of rejecting people for being different, which gay people have been fighting against for so long. This might well be used by the media to further castigate the G.L.C. for granting money to 'unworthy' causes and gays and lesbians generally.

ii) We understood the Centre was established to be a Community Centre and we are part of that Community. We believe your energies would be better used in drawing that already fragmented community together, emphasising the things we share rather than those that split us into separate factions.

iii) Bisexuals do exist and we share gay people's oppression (some of us openly and some of us secretly, just like 'real' lesbians and gays). Many of us will happily identify as lesbian or gay as well, but we dislike this preoccupation with labels and believe it is impossible to draw a line that clearly separates homosexuality and bisexuality. We fully support any person's decision to lead an exclusively homosexual lifestyle, but we cannot believe that other groups who will be using the Centre will be comprised entirely of such people.

iv) Unfortunately 99% of are still brought up with the assumption that we will be heterosexual. You may personally recall some anguish in moving from this position to being positively gay. We believe a society that welcomed bisexuality would give people the space they need to discover who they are and we believe we deserve your support in giving people this space.

David Smith

LEARNING TO LOVE MEN

Richard Sterne's personal thoughts on bisexuality

At the age of fifteen, I spent a gruelling three years in a boarding school for 'maladjusted' boys in Kent. My life seemed dominated by one overwhelming fascination, sex - with women. (Nobody ever suggested I might like to try it with men as well.) This obsession had as much to do with the need to be loved and given affection as it did with being horny. And my sexual feelings were already distorted, neurotic and focussed on porn and lavatory humour.

disturbing

One night, I had a disturbing dream. Andy, a 'known homosexual', and I were locked in a sexual embrace; kissing. Since my sexuality was so undeveloped, homosexuality had no substance for me. It was something rather dirty to snigger about, boys going soft on one another.

guilty

I felt guilty enough to confess the dream to my psychoanalyst (a bizarre man who spent most of our time together convincing me that I wanted to fuck my mother and murder my father). He was greatly concerned. 'I'm glad this has come up now,' he said in a sort of casually domineering voice. 'Because it gives me the opportunity to nip it in the bud.' Apparently I was in danger of transforming into a homosexual, an ugly condition which he made no attempt to describe but let it be known to me that it was very unpleasant. The cure was to concentrate on 'healthy' fantasies about women. This told me nothing, so I remained fearful and confused.

curious

'Why don't you feel my prick?' said a friend one night. (He was a 'known homosexual' too.) Curious, I reached out and touched a small, soft cock, through thin trousers. It responded by gently stiffening a little. He looked up into my eyes with a strange, almost malicious grin. Years on, I am told that this was 'just a phase' we all go through, soon to be grown out of. Unfortunately, this has been the pattern for most of us, diverting our feelings into more 'acceptable' manly occupations, boozing, fighting, driving fast cars and the like. So the possibility of loving our own sex becomes perverted and lost.

neurotic

For me, the little voice repeating over and over 'It's not true, I'm not a homosexual' was enough. I settled down with a neurotic heterosexuality and the terrible homophobia (fear of gays/ one's own sex) that goes with it.

desire

Three years ago my orthodox sexuality was challenged again. Lying in bed, drifting into sexual fantasy, I found myself making love with a man. In time, these fantasies became increasingly frequent and important for me. I explored my feelings very carefully and honestly, deciding eventually that I wasn't gay. So what was I trying to be? Trendy? No, it wasn't a con. I felt a genuinely sexual passion for men as well as for women. I gave that desire expression in a poem called 'For the Unknown Lover'.

'I banish doubt, it curves
  to the floor
easily as my unzipped jeans...,
I dream it all so effortlessly.'

Expressed in this way my sexuality seemed to become a new and vital force.

softness

The men in my fantasies seemed very different to those I saw at work or in the street. They were beautiful, loving and open. It was confusing. In the past I had

cont'd

associated my sex chiefly with violence, intolerance and abuse of women. Our bodies have come to seem ungainly, and muscular in a negative sense, as if built only of hardness. I rebelled against this image, searching my body and my feelings for softness and positive forms of strength. I found it more abundantly than I expected both in myself and in other men too.

exciting

I had to sort out my feelings about men, to break the awful silence. Ten months ago I finally found the opportunity, joining a Men's Support Group that meets weekly, learning to grow, challenge and understand. At last men became real and whole to me, with their pain and laughter and energy, not just cardboard cut-outs. During this difficult and exciting time, I became attracted to one of the men who had been particularly supportive to me. Sex seemed to be a natural expression of how we were feeling and I hoped that somehow the inhibitions could be overcome.

fumbling

One Friday, after the group had been doing a lot of hugging and massage, I went back to his house which was nearby. In his eyes I could see my own feelings reflected. I wanted to run like hell, but instead I found myself creeping guilt-ridden into his house, trembling with anticipation. What followed was clumsy, fumbled, and not remotely pleasurable. I panicked. Would I choke with his rubbery cock in my mouth? Please God, he won't want to fuck me in the arse! And why wasn't he bigger anyway? Kissing was the worst thing; one man's lips touching another's! I shuddered. Finally I collapsed on the sofa, feeling sordid, used and angry. But what a relief, initiated at last! Curiously enough I felt nothing more than this, just a human being with the natural desire to express my sexuality.

lovely

I was determined not to be put off by a bad first experience. The next time things were more enjoyable. We had the sense to take our clothes off, caressing and exploring each other's bodies instead of fumbling about with our trousers down! Even so, I was still only able to have sex by taking control, saying clearly what I would accept and what I wanted. Cheerfully my friend accepted all this. 'I can't see why people make so much fuss about it,' he mused, relaxing on my bed. 'It's lovely.'

scared

Since then things haven't suddenly become easy. I'm not actively seeking sex with other men. They still scare the hell out of me. So what do I find attractive in men? It's hard to say. Separating what I genuinely feel from fear and repressive conditioning is like trying to chart my way through a minefield. But I have learned that homophobia is more than a pernicious fear of gay men. We fear our entire sex, with its terrible capacity for hatred and violence. But somehow, this abominable state of affairs seems vastly preferable to opening up and sharing our true feelings.

affection

Women are viewed by men with a mixture of horror and admiration. Affection seems natural to them; they can share their feelings, hug and touch. Rather than admit to having these qualities too, we seek instead to take control of them by setting women up on a pedestal. Our ideal does not please for long. She turns out to be flawed, human and fallible. Worse still, she represents a threat, reflecting back the aspects of ourselves we fear most.

cont'd

Richard Sterne...

We defend ourselves by dealing out abuse and contempt.

But the most terrifying person of all is the 'Poof', the man who is 'like a woman'. I remember one morning, when I was working as a labourer, a young man of seventeen turning up late. He seemed distressed and out of breath. 'I saw two men holding hands and kissing in the park,' he said. 'I felt sick. I should have kicked their bloody heads in.' I could see in his eyes he was shit scared. To be honest, I felt sorry for him.

love

This brings me back to where I began, the natural affection and sexual desire between men. If we want to give up violence and oppression, then we have to reclaim our love for our own sex. I believe we are all bisexual by our very natures, though some of us are more homosexual or heterosexual than others. Can any of us become a fully developed human being without loving and sharing with both women and men? I doubt it. Living as we do, under a siege of oppression, it may seem naive or idealistic to express the belief that this is possible. But I do so, knowing that it is the only true way forward for us.

Richard Sterne lives in Suffolk. He would welcome any reactions to his article. Send any letters via Bi-monthly.

POLITICS INTO PRACTICE

BISEXUALITY – REFLEXIONS FROM A RECENT LONDON CONFERENCE

Why Day 1 was dreadful

Despite going to different workshops of varying quality the three of us all emerged from the Conference with the same sense of frustration and anger. Many people voiced their feelings of being oppressed by the lesbian and gay community, but in some people this became straightforward hostility towards the community. Some of the feelings of oppression were justified – for instance, at the NUS lesbian and gay conference bisexuals were told that their sexuality was 'a non-statement' and 'a-political' and were subjected to violent hostility. NALGO refused a lesbian-identified bisexual woman the right to attend their lesbian and gay conference . . . More generally lesbians and gay men often see bisexuality as 'the SDP of sexuality', a cop-out from people who are 'really' gay or merely as a safe half-way-house in the coming-out process – or just as sexual opportunism. However, some of the hostility at the Conference was simplistically reactionary; an outright rejection of the lesbian and gay community, with a complete lack of understanding of or sympathy with the way it behaves. This hostility was totally misplaced – there was no analysis, let alone criticism of heterosexuality in a heterosexist society. The day was so straight-identified that it made many of us feel excluded and defensive about being lesbian or gay identified and our contributions seemed to be ignored because of their political content. This was so extreme that the two (non-bisexual) gay men present were made to feel like representatives of and apologists for the entire lesbian and gay community under interrogation.

People's definitions of bisexuality ranged from the completely non-sexual (!) ('Bisexuals are people who, at some time in their lives, have (or have an awareness of their potential for) emotional and/or (*sic!*) sexual relationships with people of both sexes') via bisexuality as 'Part of the vegan compassionate way of living' to the absurd utopianism of bisexuality as the universal panacea for the world's ills; although one group decided that words which purport to describe and define actually control and regulate – labels are never adequate, but *are* politically necessary.

What happened at the 'Fallen Angel'

The two gay men arrived first – both utterly depressed and annoyed about the day and feeling they'd been unable to properly participate in it. They began discussing it all, working out how they felt . . . when two of the bisexuals arrived. The two gay men stopped talking, feeling that they couldn't talk to, or even in front of, these bisexuals. But then . . . ! some (lesbian and gay identified) bisexuals arrived, people committed to lesbian and gay liberation. One of them asked the gay men what was wrong – the gay men launched into an explanatory rant.

Their feelings stemmed from anxiety with the notion that lesbians and gay men oppress bisexuals, the general hostility to the lesbian and gay community and bisexual supremacism (as manifested, e.g., in the 'Gay is good but bi is best' badge).

In the ensuing discussion it became apparent that there was a need for mutual dialogue, trust and suppo After a great deal of alcohol and great deal of talk we solved the enti problem and thus armed we we together into. . .

The Second Day

. . . which was a complete contra

A workshop on heterosexism was on the original agenda but we had added and this was the first chance f our 'new' alliance of gay men a lesbian and gay-identified bisexu to discuss the involvement of lesb and gay-identified bisexuals wit the lesbian and gay movement and t shared roots of our oppressi heterosexism. After this the C ference split into groups to discuss Bisexual Manifest' and most of the who identified with lesbian and g liberation got together to put the i into (bi-) sexuality and add the sex politics!

Step Holdswor
Kate Fearni
George McAlpi

The above article was recently published in GAY SCOTLAND. It deals with the first Politics of Bisexuality Conference, held in London in December '84. Lud Boden was the third contributor, not George McAlpine. Kate Fearnley stressed to Bi-monthly that the article had been cut, leaving an unbalanced, negative account of the Conference. The original article was a lot more positive, but the comments about the useful and encouraging second day were drastically shortened. And in case you didn't know, the Fallen Angel is a very nice gay pub in Islington in London.

HEY, SISTERS! WHAT ABOUT US?

Jackie Roberts talks about her life

I've just finished reading issues 3 and 4 of Bi-monthly after picking them up today in Lavender Menace Bookshop. It's the first I ever really realised you were out there! I'm feeling strengthened, so able to put pen to paper.

I have identified myself as bisexual for at least six years to myself and for the last year to close friends - although I must confess to have played around with 'ambiguity' for quite a while before that.

I often feel the inadequacies and dislike the label as it has been so misunderstood and seems inexpressive of my own personal politics. I am in my early twenties, a white feminist working in academic research on media analysis. As someone who is usually very sociable with loving friends near at hand I find myself for the first time in years almost alone in a strange city, in a new job and with a growing lack of confidence as far as meeting people goes.

fear of rejection

I have never been really 'able' to involve myself in the lesbian 'world' and have often feared rejection from lesbians once I was forced to admit that I actually am prone to emotional and sexual relationships with men - that I am still physically attracted to men, SHOCK HORROR! Even though I am fairly intolerant of men in general; their behaviour, attitudes, over-emphasis on sexual relations and dependance on women pisses me off, I have met and love some men who are different in many ways - not completely but dealable with! I often feel I would like to 'identify' with lesbian women fully, to be accepted and deny my bisexuality, but to identify completely as a lesbian would be a lie and to deny myself and to deny the meaningful relationships I have with certain male friends and my male lover.

At times though I yearn so much for my sexuality to be recognised and for more contact with lesbian and bisexual women. I do feel my strongest emotional and political committment towards women; I am a convinced radical feminist. I've had a lot of sympathetic support from feminist women friends and people not immediately put off when I 'come out with it'! I've been able to talk at length to certain people about my sexual politics - but how often have I felt that it would be easier if they were like me! One positive aspect of this discussion is that many of them have started to think afresh about their own sexuality and have been prepared to admit that they feel attracted to the same sex and perhaps in time...!

radical feminist

However, I still often feel that they see me as mainly straight, because my male friend/lover is also their friend, and no matter how much we fight against it we are lumped together as a couple - YUK! It is convenient for people just because they see you with a bloke to automatically assume that you are 'straight'. I often feel I really have to push my sexual identity to get it recognised by friends even.

witches and fairies

I can remember having fantasies about women - usually witches and fairies!! - at an early age, which looking back were definitely sexual and also having particularly inept sexual encounters with school-girl friends, which were heavily heterosexually oriented - male-female role-play. Although I always ended up playing the boy and at the same time knew I was really playing the girl too! I always felt physically and mentally attracted to women and went through emotional hell in my late teens

cont'd

Jackie Roberts...

because I couldn't talk about it to anyone and lived in daily fear of someone being able to read my thoughts. I also became fairly promiscuous, getting used by a lot of men, usually with painful consequences - many of which did not surface until I became very depressed in my first year at college.

proud

I have never really 'given up' on my sexuality; I knew it was there and never really denied it to myself, even though it may have sometimes got buried underneath the apparent heterosexuality and fear of rejection, especially from women friends, until a while ago. I now see my sexual identity as a powerful and political statement - a refusal to be bound by society's expectations and norms; a state of emotional and sexual freedom, not rigidly defined; not promiscuity just openness. I see it for me as a state where sex isn't seen as the ultimate goal and where touching doesn't stop at a friendly hug always, for fear of misinterpretation; where passionate friendships with both sexes are seen as'normal'. I am proud of who I am.

bisexual women ignored

It annoys me so much when we are put down or ridiculed, made to feel'incomplete' because we are neither at one extreme nor the other. It especially saddens me when lesbian women put down bisexual women. Although I support separatism and women-only spaces; I can understand hatred and distrust of men (gay and straight) - shit, I've felt it so much myself - but I hate it when one group of women alienates other women when they need support so badly and not rejection. The women's movement must fight against ageism, classism, racism and unfair discrimination against sisters with disabilities and lesbians; so why are bisexual women ignored so often and made to feel rejected? Feminists become full of guilt when their prejudices are pointed out to them, but why is it that the refusal of the women's movement to actively discuss bisexuality - to any positive degree anyway - does not make feminists feel they are hurting a lot of their sisters? I hate the feeling of knowing I have to justify my sexuality, of feeling guilty because I'm not easily defined and can't easily be explained. I'm not a mystery to myself, only to other people.

frustrated

I have never really had close contact with men and women who are actively bisexual, not so I could talk openly to them,and I feel I have come to the point where I need this so badly. I feel frustrated that I've never really been able to speak to someone who completely understands how I feel. I want to share ideas, frustrations, strength, warmth, feel fully accepted as a whole being where my sexual orientations aren't hidden. I want to be involved with developing a sexual politics with others who have been through some of the same things - especially other young men and women.

confidence

I have had a sexual friendship with a woman which was extremely problematic - basically a lack of compatability and personality clash from the start - yet it taught me a lot about myself and gave me vital confidence to 'come out' to friends - I couldn't really avoid it when it was blatently obvious seeing us together.

support

I'd like to talk to others abo how we can support each other an emotional and practical way how we can have non-destructiv ly dependent, non-monogamous sexual relationships and pass ate friendships where people c

cont'd

Jackie Roberts . . .

grow and gain strength rather than be sucked down by possessiveness and dependence. I am also interested to talk about how we deal with the contradictions as feminist women having men as lovers and how we can get bisexuality on the feminist agenda and recognised by 'the rest of the world' in a positive way.

saddened

I am constantly saddened and angered by the lack of groups, meeting places, magazines and discussion papers etc. where bisexual people can openly share each other's company, ideas and experiences and form a political force that is not swallowed up in gay and lesbian politics. I want to be part of a movement that makes sure young people never have to go through the painful time of thinking it is completely abnormal and unheard of for someone to fancy both sexes!

I have gained so much from the Women's Movement and feminist friends, feminist writing and lesbian writing, but why am I forced to admit that most of the really interesting stuff written in an accessible way on bisexuality has come from men - in the Men's Anti-sexist Newsletter, Against Patriarchy and Bimonthly? Thanks brothers! Reading feminist and lesbian books and magazines you'd think we didn't exist or were too idealogically unsound to consider. I'm sick of people getting away with the idea that only pop stars are bisexual and that that's O.K. - usually when it's male stars though! However when it comes to us 'ordinary' folk we're seen as perverts - well, I'm not a pervert - I have to come into contact with perverts most days of my life, so I can recognise one when I see one.

I refuse to be ridiculed, silenced, patronised, misunderstood or put down anymore. I have fought for years as a feminist to reject these oppressive devices and now I've got to stand up as a 'whole'person to fight for the right to be openly bisexual in the gay and lesbian world and in the feminist world and in the straight world, wherever - in the whole world.

Jackie Roberts is a founder member of the Edinburgh Bisexual Group. She would welcome any response to her article. Send your replies via Bimonthly.

What the Bisexual Group means to me

I began coming to the London Bisexual Group (LBG) a year ago to overcome a serious bout of aloneness stemming from my move to London from Los Angeles six months earlier. As I expected the Group was full of thoughtful and interesting people, encouraging discussion of topics most straight people would feel uncomfortable with, and 'politically correct' homosexuals offended by. What I didn't expect was such a variety of people, all bringing very different experiences of coming out, dealing with the lesbian and gay scene, jobs, families and the personal politics which grow out of an 'alternative' lifestyle. It is so refreshing to participate in a group that doesn't seek to impose one definition of sexuality on those attending its meetings. There is no LBG party line that you must believe in. And it is the diversity of opinions that makes the discussions so thought-provoking.

The discussions and other group activities (such as workshops in massage and dance) helped me to break the ice and meet new people and make friends in a painless way, and they have given me a better understanding of bisexual, lesbian and gay lifestyles.

Ellen Weissbuch

ANDROGYNY & WORDS

some thoughts on past issues

I don't think I like the emphasis on androgyny in the magazine. Firstly it's only an option for thin, young-looking people, because of the distinct distributions of fat according to sex, and because the androgyne must look beardless, which involves looking young. Secondly, since the only androgyne I know is homosexual, I would hesitate to describe androgynes as 'likely to be bisexual' (Rachel's article in issue 4). Thirdly, the reason Boy George caused such a stir is less because of his dress and more because despite the dress he is known to be a man. I don't agree that we 'wear our sexuality in our clothes' - unless we are some sort of fetishist. We do wear our sex in our clothes, and since it seems to be fashionable to use 'sexuality' to mean 'sex' perhaps this is what Rachel means.

too fat

There's also the question of whether androgyny is doing away with stereotypes or creating new ones. 'On the street' (as opposed to 'on the stage') androgynes tend to dress as young men. As Rachel says, don't expect to see men in dresses. Rather, expect to see women in trousers concealing evidence of their sex. Androgyny is certainly interesting, but I'm not certain that I'm happy about the way some of your writers seem to indicate that you can't be bisexual without being androgynous. Certainly it's an option but only that. I am attracted to women and men as distinctive, different people, and do not fancy androgynes. I am too fat to be androgynous, and am physically uncomfortable wearing trousers. I don't begrudge anyone else their choice but I don't like the way it seems to be portrayed as more than that.

hermaphrodite

Concerning the letters about definitions of the word 'androgyny' (letters, issue 5) I always thought that a person of both genders physically and equally was called an 'hermaphrodite'. Dictionaries say that 'androgyne' means the same as this. However, I'm glad to see you've realised at this early stage that a word doesn't mean what the dictionary says it does if everyone else uses it differently. For example, 'celibate' now means not having sex with others. But I've not yet come across a dictionary that defines it as anything other than 'not married'.

bi-lesbian

Further to Catherine's letter in issue 5, I wonder how long it will be before men colonise the word 'bisexual' as they have colonised 'homosexual' and 'gay'. I can remember when 'gay' and 'homosexual' clearly referred to members of both sexes, and were used with another word if only one sex was under discussion. Now men have taken over both words, and, like words like 'men', they can be used to define both sexes together, or men alone, but not women alone. Also it is rarely clear whether these words are being used for both sexes or for men alone, thus continuing the 'Manglish' assumption that men are representative and women are freaks. 'Bilesbian', anyone?

casual sex

Whilst on the subject of words, in another letter (issue 7) Catherine objects to the use of the word 'fuck'. I thought Jeff used the word 'fuck' to emphasise the silliness of a view of bisexuality which only involves a great deal of casual sex. In that context the word seems to be properly used, since the sort of person who does have that view of bisexuality is likely to see all sex as fucking.

more

I loved Eternal Flame (the story by Maria in issue 3) - pity there wasn't more of it.

Joy Hibbert

ANSWERING BACK

zaidie parr considers why bisexuals are politically invisible

In two issues of Bi-monthly, there have been articles by gay men slagging off bisexuals. I am unclear as to why these articles are printed - are we supposed to be kind and understanding about them, or take them to heart, or get involved in a slanging match, or what?

angry and hurt

It seems important not to mimic their dishonest polemic, at the same time I would like to answer their accusations. (Although I am angry and hurt at the unfeeling nature of this blanket condemnation, I hope not to offend those gays and lesbians who support us, because we are all out on a limb in Thatcher's Britain and we should stand together. Let's hope we can!)

challenging stereotypes

In my experience the reaction of some gay men to bisexuals organising is almost spiteful, as if they resent our success in challenging sexual stereotypes. We reject compulsory heterosexuality but we also reject the lifestyle politics of those gay and lesbian activists who have responded to the ideology of compulsory heterosexuality by asserting that everyone is either gay or straight and that this is 'true'.

Unfortunately it is difficult to establish "truth" in a capitalist, patriarchal society. What we lack is a useful socialist, "true", feminist theory of sexuality. In the absence of such a theory one of the main reasons for the bisexual silence may be that we see the dangers in theories of exclusive heterosexuality or homosexuality, but we do not want to damage the cause or threaten the political position of gays and lesbians. However, far from respecting our concern and far from even perceiving the self-serving nature of their beliefs, they slag us off in this blinkered and contemptuous fashion.

our voice will be heard

Bisexuals are looking for a more permanent change in society than those who advocate lifestyle politics had bargained for. I hope that we will continue to organise and that our voice will be heard in the debate about sexual orientation, given that we have indeed given our love and support to the struggles of the oppressed, whether this is recognised or not.

active

Some of those very people who were not allowed to speak at the NUS Conference "because bisexual oppression is meaningless" are in fact very active in Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners groups. Perhaps they didn't reveal their orientation for fear of exclusion. Perhaps they took a political position to prioritise the struggle of gays and lesbians.

It is not surprising that, faced with this exclusion, bisexuals inquire, "Why are politics so important?" This is an understandable reaction to political bigotry! Perhaps we should be asking what right people such as Angelo have to assert that the first efforts of bisexuals to organise themselves nationally are "politically right-wing". He has no right to assert that we are "not involved in politically relevant campaigns". What does he know about us, apart from his own cynical fantasies?

cont'd

zaidie parr...

But it is not only NUS but lesbians in NALGO, Gay Switchboard and lots of other organisations who have prevented bisexuals from being heard and supporting each other.

I hope that we can now get on and work with lesbian and gay people against the present backlash. At the same time we also have the right to organise independently if we wish to do so, even if it is to avoid being bombarded by such articles, so that we can have the space to discuss our own political direction.

Zaidie Parr is a member of the Radical Bisexual Network

Personal Ads & Letters

Hi! I'm 26 years old, female, feel rather isolated. I would like a pen-friend / relationship with the right person in my vicinity. I live in North Humberside, a long way from London. Am I the only person in Humberside.

J.S.

Brian, 23, graduate, would welcome contact with other bisexuals in Essex/Romford area.

B.S.

In issue no.7 of the Bi-monthly I found an article entitled 'Bisexual Politics'. This seemed to suggest that 'bisexual' is a very negative word and that until it is as strong as 'gay' or 'lesbian' we should call ourselves 'gay'.
Surely, if as bisexuals we are going to make a stand in the world, we should say 'I am bisexual' as nothing can be achieved by saying otherwise. The words 'gay' or 'lesbian' still shock and threaten straight society as 'bisexual' at the moment does not, since we either hide it away or consider ourselves gay.
Bisexual people must make a stand in both gay and straight society to make our presence known and be very open and 'out' bisexuals. Nothing can be done until we do this.

cont'd

I am currently trying to organize a gay/bisexual group in Leicester and suggest others try the same so we may be as strong as the gay world currently is.
We mustn't be pushed to one side or have people doubt our existence. It's up to us as bisexuals to make such a noise we threaten both gay and straight circles. Only then will we be accepted as a genuine group of men and women with genuine sexual and emotional needs.

Neil Lewin
Leicester

Dear friends,
I'm pleased to see the Bi-monthly finding its feet as a forum for a range of views and news. I found the last issue both interesting and challenging - especially the Politics of Bisexuality section. It was in fact George and Sten's letter which jolted my complacency. So long as the magazine/newsletter prints both complimentary and uncomplimentary (such as the LGYM Newsletter article) views from bis, gays and, as far as I'm concerned, hets, it will for me be a valuable source of information which enables me to assess my sexuality more fully.
It is only by gaining understand- of the implications of our sexuality that we bisexuals can fully participate in the challenge to the negative aspects of heterosexuality and in the sexual liberation of others.
Keep up the good work.

Richard
London.

POPPIES

a bisexual man leads the Revolution

Congratulations to Gay Sweatshop. In the year when the theatre company celebrates its tenth birthday, 'Poppies', the latest production is a triumph. It is a hopeful, rousing and deeply thoughtful play which despite the seriousness of its themes is extremely witty and amusing in the tradition of 'Waiting for Godot'.

1987

Written by Noel Greig, a founder member of the company, 'Poppies' is set in 1987. On a cold autumn evening Sammy and Snow, his lover for some years, settle down on a bench on Parliament Hill to await the 'nuking' of London. For Sammy, an Oxford graduate of the late '30s, it is a time for nostalgia, sorrow and regret. He never did realise his ambition to be a writer. But Parliament Hill evokes much more harrowing memories for him. It is here that he met the one real love of his life, Flag, a young airforce volunteer, about to depart for service in World War Two. The young Sam loved Flag passionately and lost him tragically. Ever since, he has wandered the Heath trying to recreate that love through brief encounters in the bushes. But he has never been able to make the ultimate commitment, even to Snow.

doom

Snow is much more positive. Married with children when he first met Sammy, he ideally wanted to lead a bisexual lifestyle - loving both his wife and Sammy. But neither could accept this. So he abandoned his wife and devoted himself to Sammy and their life together. Despite the awful impending n he doggedly and persistly keeps his mind on the ment and makes plans for the re, while Sammy watches his ger self and Flag recreate doomed love affair.

A third couple inhabit the stage throughout. Ghosts from the First World War perhaps, commenting chorus-like on the joys and tragedies of life. One a well-to-do epicurean socialite longing to delight again in the joys of food, clothing, entertainment, human tenderness; the other a bitter, disillusioned Glaswegian member of a Highland regiment. They argue and menace each other with weapon-like hunks of scrap metal whose ever increasing size echoes the remorseless arms race, which has led to the crisis of the moment and to the impending holocaust.

arms race

The three couples each illustrate a struggle between a love for life and a death wish. The Glaswegian, having won the parody of arms escalation, is traumatised by the feeling that he is about to be reincarnated and reborn. Only the irrepressible love of life of his companion can finally prevail to convince him that the pain of death is certainly worth the joys of life.

pacifist

The young Sam was a pacifist and conscientious objector, while Flag went cheerfully to his death fighting for his country. I suffered an uncomfortable moment during the play when, like Sam, I was unable to think of a convincing counter argument to Flag's nationalistic posturing, which sounded all the more convincing coming as it did from a likeable loving person. Only later did Sam know what he should have said in reply. Every German soldier killed in the war could so easily have been someone met on the Heath with whom one spent a delightful afternoon naked on the rug in front of the gas fire.

new order

Sammy wants to bury his mementos in a biscuit tin and await the Bomb. Snow, however, rediscovers

cont'd

WARGAMES

Regarding the short piece in issue 6 about War Games: in the sub-culture in which I spend most of my time there are a lot of wargame players of various types. In my experience they are no more likely to be violent, pro-nuke or militaristic than anyone else. My husband plays wargames, mostly by post, and is anti-nuclear like myself. There is a difference between encouraging impressionable children to play with guns etc. and adults deciding to play wargames. Boys rarely have a choice about whether to have war toys, it's just assumed that boys have guns. An adult can make a free choice. They are called 'wargames' partly out of habit, partly because most of the scenarios come from wars, whether real ones in the past, or fictional future wars. I used to play various futuristic wargames and it never did me any harm. I stopped when I lost interest, not for any ethical reason. If you assume adults should not play wargames, where do you draw the line? Chess, Go and Draughts are all wargames too. What of Monopoly? Is it ideologically correct to give people the idea that it is clever to bankrupt other people? Or Scrabble? Teaching people that it's important to prove intellectual superiority. Few games are ideologically correct. Joy Hibbert

Not all bisexuals are mostly gay!

There seems to be a tendency in issue 7 to assume that bisexuals are mostly gay and thus would be happier working within the gay movements than, say, the women's movement (including male feminist groups). I am mostly straight; I have loved women, but not yet in the physical sense, due to the fact that I don't fancy women unless I love them, and the women I have loved have been uninterested in a sexual relationship. A minority among minorities! There seems to be an implication that the only way you can to 'ou as a bisexual is by working with the gay movement. Such simple expedients as telling your friends, talking about it with them, just seem not to be mentioned. I've got nothing against the gay movements, but they are bothered by bisexuals (who can at any time pretend to be straight and become 'respectable' again), and I believe the same ends can be achieved by working within the feminist movement, and that a great deal can be achieved simply by being a good example. Therefore I'd be much happier if the manifestoes included this idea, as well as working in the gay communities. Other than that I think I prefer the first manifesto.

joy hibbert

POPPIES...

a lost dimension to his life in the form of his wife and son. Rousingly he proposes that they all join a banned Remembrance Day March, which he hopes will lead to the storming of Buckingham Palace. While the powers that be are skulking fearfully in their bunkers, now is the time for the establishment of a new order.

After a second controversial tour of Britain Gay Sweatshop will be back in London at the Fleet Centre, NW3 for one more performance of 'Poppies'.

David Smith

NEWS ACTION NEWS

On Friday 12th April members of the London Bisexual Group will be at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre from 6pm to welcome anyone arriving from outside London for the Politics of Bisexuality Conference. Coincidentally, Friday 12th April is also the date of the party to celebrate the official opening of the Centre. It is hoped that there will be a large bisexual presence at the Centre on that evening - we want to be seen and heard.

successful

Matt Milne and other members of the London Bisexual Group have helped the Lesbian and Gay Pride Week committee in a magnificent fund-raising effort. The Bock-Sale at Islington Town Hall on 23rd February raised over £2,000 towards the cost of staging the events of Pride Week in June. Special thanks were extended to the London Bisexual Group for a donation of £50 which helped cover the initial expenses, like the cost of hiring the Town Hall.

demonstrating

Members of the London Bisexual Group were among the 100-strong contingent of lesbians and gays which joined the demonstration in support of the Miners' Strike on Sunday 24th February. More than 60,000 people marched from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square amid colourful colliery banners and to the sound of brass bands. The mood was cheerful until the police arrested two miners in Whitehall. Marchers, including the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual group, joined a sit-down protest which the police then broke up using police horses. One member of the London Bisexual Group was arrested for allegedly attacking a police horse.

A new group of politically radical bisexuals has been set up. The group, called the Radical Lesbian/Gay-Identified Bisexual Network, grew out of the first Politics of Bisexuality Conference. As yet there have been no meetings of the group as members are spread all over the country. However there is a mailing list. If you wish to join the network or to circulate any material or information to other members, contact Kate Fearnley via Bi-monthly. The group will be strongly represented at the second conference in April.

new group

A new Bisexual Group, only the second in Britain, has started to meet in Edinburgh. The group grew out of the first "Politics of Bisexuality" conference held in December '84. The meetings take place in the Lesbian and Gay Centre in Broughton Street, Edinburgh on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of every month.

derided

Six members of the London Bisexual Group were mocked and derided during a meeting to plan the 2nd Politics of Bisexuality Conference at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre. Some women members of the lesbian and Gay Youth Movement apparently objected to the presence of bisexuals in the Centre. The whole group found enough in 'Bi-monthly' to keep them highly amused for over an hour. A Centre worker later apologised for this behaviour and said that bisexuals were indeed welcome in the Centre. However complaints from the LGYM seem to have lead to the banning of Bisexual groups from the Centre.

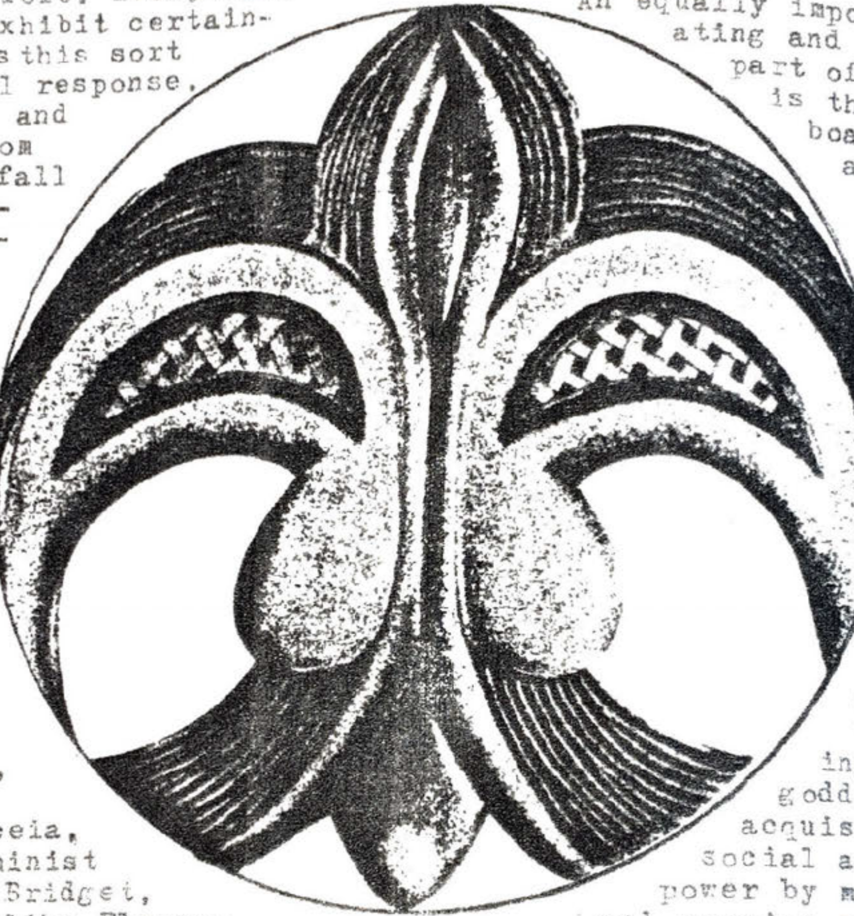
DAVID SMITH

THE DINNER PARTY

Hailed as the most important art exhibition of the decade, Judy Chicago's 'The Dinner Party' opened on 1st March at The Warehouse in White Lion Street, Islington, London N1 and runs until 26th May.

awe-inspiring

The show is stunningly beautiful and awe-inspiring. I was profoundly moved, in a way that only religious experiences have moved me before. Everything about the exhibit certainly evokes this sort of spiritual response. In a hushed and darkened room spotlights fall on to a triangular dinner table with place settings for 39 honoured female guests - mythical and historical. They include the ancient Indian goddess, Kali, the Greek poet, Sappho, the warrior queen, Boadaceia, the Irish feminist saint, Saint Bridget, great rulers like Eleanor of Aquitaine and Elizabeth R, the American feminist and suffragist, Susan B.Anthony and the writer, Virginia Woolf.



One thinks both of the Last Supper and of an altar. Indeed each place at the table is decorated by an embroidered cloth bearing motifs relevant to the guest. These cloths are reminiscent of altar cloths whose rich decoration is greatly admired but whose makers, the women behind the scenes, are never recognised.

The art of ceramic painting is the other traditional but little recognised women's skill which is celebrated in the exhibition. Each guest has a plate with a personalised design based on the shape of the vulva and the vagina. These vital aspects of women's anatomy have been largely ignored in male art portraying women. The illustration shows the design on the plate for Eleanor of Aquitaine which incorporates the Fleur de Lys.

An equally important, fascinating and enlightening part of the exhibition is the information boards on which are listed the names of 990 other women whose names also appear on the ceramic tiled floor beneath the dinner table. Along with the names is a wealth of information charting the supplanting of female goddesses, the acquisition of social and political power by men, the gradual erosion of women's rights from ancient times up to the Reformation and the continuous struggle of women to win back those rights and regain their place of equality in society.

Did you know, for example, that between 6 and 9 million women killed for witchcraft? Or that North American Indian women took their place alongside the men in battle? I didn't.

David Smith

WANTED

information and help

In recent months the London Bisexual Group has received well over 100 enquiries about its activities, its meetings and about the Bi-monthly. The enquiries have come from as far afield as Derbyshire, Bedfordshire, Eire, Essex, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Herts, Kent, Humberside, Liverpool, Middlesex, Northamptoshire, Somerset, Staffordshire, Surrey, Sussex, Wales and even Saudi Arabia and India. The enquiries come mostly as a result of listings in such magazines as Spare Rib, Gay News, Gay Times, Time Out and City Limits.

groups

Each correspondant is sent information about the London Bisexual Group and a copy of Bi-monthly. We also try to give advice on personal problems and on how to go about meeting other bisexual people and how to break out of isolation. Almost all of the switchboards, groups, clubs, pubs, etc. we can point people towards tend to be lesbian and gay - and although some correspondants will undoubtedly welcome this information, if they don't have it already, not all of them want to or are ready to launch into the gay world. Thus we would welcome information from readers around the country about mixed (gay/bisexual/heterosexual) venues and groups which specifically welcome bisexual people.

contacts

There are only two bisexual groups in Britain - in London and in Edinburgh - but we hope to hear of others being set up in the near future.' (Neil Lewin is trying to start one in Leicester.) In the meantime we maintain a list of 'contacts' in various areas - in Edinburgh, Northumberland, Cleveland, Leeds, Harrogate, Herefordshire, Devon, Shropshire, Leicester, Birmingham and Dublin.

If you would like to be put in touch with any of these contacts write to us. Hopefully it will be a way of getting more groups started or at least of making people feel less isolated. We would also like to extend our list of contacts - if you are interested in having your name added to the list, let us know.

bookshops

We would also like to extend the availability of Bi-monthly around the country, so we would be glad to receive the names and addresses of bookshops which might be willing to stock copies of Bi-monthly. The most likely places will be left-wing, alternative and women's bookshops. And since the personal touch works better, if you could take a copy of Bi-monthly to the bookshop and ask whether they are interested, so much the better. But let's have the information anyway.

Chance to explore bisexuality

Simon Callow, probably the first man to say 'I love you' to another man on stage, was interviewed in GAY TIMES recently. After work with Gay Sweatshop, he starred in AMADEUS. In CHANCE IN A MILLION on TV he plays Tom ('deeply heterosexual to the point of parody') Chance, and the role allows him as a gay actor to explore his own bisexuality.
He said:'I am without question a gay actor, but at the same time, as a human being, I have been all my life a homosexual. We are all in a profound state of complexity. At 35, there is a whole other side of me which has not been explored. I believe bisexuality is intrinsic, whereas most of humanity would say it's unnatural. The sexual side that I have not explored in life, I have explored in acting. If I haven't explored the other side of myself, then it's for reasons I'm not sure of. We should never forget that some of the best gay charaters have been played by straight men.'

david smith

A.I.D.S.

The number of confirmed cases of A.I.D.S. (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) in Britain has now reached 118 and 51 people have died.

Contrary to the image portrayed by the gutter press (including the Times) of a Gay Plague, the disease is by no means restricted to gay men. Among the people who have died most recently are three women. In France and Belgium 50% of sufferers are heterosexual. Intravenous drug users and haemophiliacs are also at risk of infection from dirty hypodermic syringe needles and blood transfusions respectively.

The disease seems to have begun in Zaire in Central Africa where it is prevalent among heterosexuals. From there it moved to Europe and Haiti, which was a popular holiday resort for American gay men who took the disease back to the United States. There have now been 10,000 cases in the USA and 3,000 people have died. The disease first occured in Britain in December 1981 when flights to the USA were at their cheapest.

virus in bodily fluids

The virus which causes the disease is transmitted via bodily fluids (blood, semen, urine and faeces) which find their way into another person's blood stream through internal and external breaks in the skin and through the digestive system. This occurs mostly during sexual intercourse. Despite uncertainty, there is no concrete evidence that the virus can be transmitted in saliva.

French and American scientists have worked out the structure of the virus, known as HTLV 111, which attacks the immune system in the blood and reduces the body's ability to fight disease. Sufferers are thus prone to pneumonia, fungal diseases and Kaposi's sarcoma (a skin cancer). It is these and other "opportunistic diseases" which kill, not A.I.D.S. itself.

As yet there is no cure for A.I.D.S. and no vaccine. A test which can identify the presence in the blood of antibodies to the virus has been developed. But no-one can say whether the presence of such antibodies is a sign that a person has successfully combatted the disease or whether it is still developing in the blood-stream.

The number of cases of A.I.D.S. is likely to double every six months. The gay press has been warning of this for years, but the government has been slow to provide money for research and care. A public education campaign is also necessary to counter the misinformation in the media which is presenting gays as the cause and heterosexuals as the real victims of this disease.

media targets

Hysteria and a back-lash are distinct possibilities - if not already a reality. Along with gay men bisexual men are being targeted by the media, though the emphasis will be different. Most of the women suffering from A.I.D.S. are partners of bisexual men or of intravenous drug users, or they are intravenous drug users themselve On Wednesday March 6th the SUN headlined the story of an air-hostess suffering fom A.I.D.S. 'The pretty young victim' was said to have caught the disease from a bisexual steward who is now dead. The steward was said t have had an affair with another steward who is also now dead. This story was not the occasion for a witch-hunt, as in the case of the prison chaplain who died, but an occasion for pointing the finger of blame, this time at a bisexual man for introducing A.I.D.S. into the heterosexual community. In another A.I.D.S. story The NEWS OF THE WORLD quoted a woman as saying, 'I don' mind gay people. But I hate thes bisexuals. I think they're disgusting.'

david smith

For further information

A couple of short extracts from CAN WE TALK? an attractive, witty brochure on safe-sex available from GCM. BM6914, LONDON WC1N 3XX.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a serious crisis affecting everyone, but especially gay men. We wrote this brochure to inform gay men of risky, not-so-risky, and safe sexual practices. And just as importantly, we want this brochure to help all of us gain the strength to make the necessary changes in our sexual lives—changes that will help us experience sexuality which is sensuous, satisfying, *and* safe

We also must support local organizations in demanding that government and health institutions respond to this crisis. We have a right to quality health care. We refuse to die as a result of homphobic governmental neglect. The AIDS crisis will end only when we exercise that political strength we have built over the years.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

CUT BACK

Although drugs and alcohol aren't considered a direct cause of AIDS, we need to be concerned about them, just as we are about our sexual practices. Research shows that alcohol, speed, marijuana and poppers damage the immune system, leaving us open to diseases we might otherwise be able to ward off and perhaps making us more susceptible to AIDS. I.V. drug use is a direct high risk for AIDS.

Also, drugs and alcohol can impair our judgement and damage our ability to make wise decisions. When we get high, we are likely to be tempted into sexual activities which are riskier for AIDS.

So cut down or eliminate your drug and alcohol use. If you use drugs, don't use needles. And if you think you have a drug or alcohol problem, get professional help.

SAFER...

Advice from the Terrence Higgins Trust to cut down your risk of getting Aids:

1. *Have sex with fewer men.*
2. Avoid anal sex, except possibly with your regular partner(s).
3. Avoid sex with men who have had sex in high risk areas (especially the USA) in the last three years.
4. Have sex only with men who have few other sexual partners.
5. Since the virus has been found even in saliva, perhaps the only safe sex is mutual masturbation, body rubbing and dry kissing.

Until we know more you should not give blood or carry an organ donor card.

(The Terrence Higgins Trust Helpline 01-278 8745 – open every evening, 7-10pm).

...SEX

Guidelines published in Capital Gay.

Books

AIDS - Your questions answered, Richard B. Fisher, Gay Men's Press.

Published in April '84, Richard Fisher's book is slightly out of date now. It came before the discovery of HTLV 3 (the virus which causes A.I.D.S.) and before the development of the test for antibodies to the virus. But it is an immensely readable and useful book, dealing in a thorough scientific way with the spread of the disease. It is particularly interesting as a history of the search for the cause of A.I.D.S. and as a history of the reactions in the gay community and in society as a whole. The books hopeful conclusion is that A.I.D.S. will arouse sympathy among the general public for gay men. Highly recommended. Available at £1.95 from bookshops or at £1.95 plus postage and packing from Gay Men's Press (GMP Publishers Ltd), PO Box 247, London N15 6RW.

Gay Switchboard: (01)-837 7324 (open 24 hours) can answer general queries about AIDS. They can also give you details of your local clinics and can put you in touch with local gay support groups.

Terrence Higgins Trust (BM/AIDS, London WC1N 3XX) runs an AIDS Information Line (01) 278 8745 from 8 p.m. - 10 p.m. Mondays to Fridays and runs a support group for people with AIDS, and their friends and families.

***The AIDS handbook*, Kenneth H Mayer MD and H F Pizer, Bantam Books (Toronto, New York, London and Sydney).**

HEALTH EDUCATION COUNCIL

The Health Education Council's leaflet is a little vague and coy, but it includes the basic information. Available from 78, New Oxford Street, London.

Letter from Germany on 'women's pages' and poverty

Dear Bi-monthly,

I'd like to respond to John's idea of having a women-only page (BI-Monthly No. 7). It sounds good at first. But I can't help it, it does remind me of those established newspapers. Most of them have a 'women's page'. This usually is the page people - especially men - don't read, and I'm afraid the same could happen here. Besides the feminist topics then seem less relevant, and women might be encouraged to concentrate merely on this page. In my eyes 'women's pages' always have a touch of condescending generosity on the part of men. How would they like it if women gave them a 'men's page' as a kind of present?

I agree with John that women should contribute more, and he certainly is right when he fears that 'the group might force women out by it's attitudes etc.' LBG is in general male-dominated and therefore sometimes sexist. Obviously being bisexual does not necessarily mean to be anti-sexist. I was glad the Conference was different - with a few exceptions i.e. the ill-famed 'Bi is best' badge for example.

I have had a few thoughts about the Draft Manifesto No.1. I feel strongly that we should include 'poverty' in the statement: 'we recognise the links between the oppression of people because of sex, sexuality, gender identity, disability, race, age, class, nationality, religion, etc.' The lower middle class is a good example that class and poverty are not the same. Furthermore I wonder why this whole list is not included in the statement: 'we strongly support...the freedom of all people, regardless of age, sex or disability, to explore and define openly their own sexual styles...with others who share the same freedom and consent.' And finally with regard to this last phrase I'd like to put more emphasis (in Aim No.3) on the fact that children too have the right to say no and that no-one has the 'right' to force them into sexual contact - neither by physical nor psychic violence.

Yours with love and pride,

Mirjam Ulrich

Action on A.I.D.S. — Don't get scared, get angry!

The Labour Campaign for Gay Rights and the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (in conjunction with the Terrence Higgins Trust and the London Gay Switchboard) are organising a campaign of action on A.I.D.S. The four main priority areas for action are:

1) Organising an offensive against media distortion of A.I.D.S.

2) Campaigning within the Trades Union movement for action at all levels to protect lesbians, gay men and bisexuals (and any other group which might be targeted by the media e.g. 'Africans' and haemophiliacs) against victimisation in the workplace

3) Fighting for increased resources from both central and local government for research, pat care and health education.

4) Combatting cases of victimisation of lesbians, gay men an bisexuals.

There will be a meeting for tho wishing to be involved in the campaign

on TUESDAY 2ND APRIL at 8pm
at LONDON LESBIAN AND GAY
CENTRE
67-69 Cowcross Street
LONDON EC1

If you live outside London or jus want more information phone:

Hugh Robertson
(work) 01 388 2366 ext. 334
(home) 01 485 2493
or Anna Durell
(work) 01 359 3973 (direct line
(home) 01 607 6914 (women only)

S & M

Joy Hibbert argues it's personal not political

I was particularly interested to read Pink Dandelion's article on S and M (issue 7), being a masochist myself. It was especially nice to see such an understanding article because of a bit of unpleasantness I've had on the subject from the feminist establishment lately. Since S&M is largely a role-playing thing, since the slave tells the master/mistress how far to go, since most sadomasochists can take both roles and enjoy them, I can't see how it can represent the ultimate in role divisions. Part of the problem is that there are as many attitudes to S&M as there are practicers and theorisers. For example, a person with insensitive skin could well need the stimulation of quite severe pain in order to get excited, and on the surface this would appear to be masochism. But there would be no element of power on either side, so what could the objections be?

enjoy yourself

I can't help wondering how many of the people who object to S&M on ideological grounds are just rationalising an aesthetic distaste. The only thing that bothers me about Pink Dandelion's article is the tendency to go too far the other way. Should any sexual act be performed for political reasons? There are those who say you can't be a feminist unless you are a lesbian, since you are giving energy to men. This is a one-sided view of sex, suggesting it is done entirely for male benefit. There are those who believe that S&M is a symbol of liberation, but who could enjoy S&M unless they are that way by nature? Why don't people of different sexual needs just enjoy themselves and stop trying to set themselves up as the one true way, or trying toput others down for their own needs.

I would also like to argue against the assumption that all S&M sex is casual sex with a casual partner, and that all other sex is with a loving partner. I wouldn't have S&M sex with a casual partner - I value my life, health and able-bodiedness too much for that. So all S&M sex is warm, sensuous and communicative to me, because it is done with people who love me (men who love me, that is. For some reason my desires for women are normal.) Ordinary sex might not be like this, since it might be with a casual partner. I'm not putting down casual sex; it just doesn't suit me, that's all. Also I don't think a male top-female bottom situation is a problem unless the woman behaves like a slave the rest of the time as well. One other question about S&M which could have been raised in the article is the question of bisexual sadomasochists who have different feelings regarding each sex. For example, it tends to be assumed that bisexuals will be dominant with women and submissive with men. Is this accurate, and, if so, why?

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COPY DATE

The Copy date for Bi-monthly No.9 is May 24th. If you want to write anything for the next issue please send it before then to BM/BI, LONDON WC1N 3XX. If you can type your contributions, it will save us lots of time. We would also welcome comments on this issue and ideas for future articles.

LONDON BISEXUAL GROUP

Programme

APRIL

Tues 2	Non-competitive games -Richard Sexism in the Gay World - Rachel
Tues 9	Video - John

FRIDAY -SUNDAY 12-14 APRIL
SECOND NATIONAL BISEXUAL CONFERENCE
at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre

*Tues 16	Bisexual Identities - Dorothy Conference feedback
Tues 23	AIDS - a threat from the Media - Brian
Tues 30	Feedback on the Bi-Monthly - Jules Bisexuals and SM - Gary

MAY

Tues 7	Transactional Analysis - Ken Hills
Tues 14	Video - John
*Tues 21	Attitudes towards marriage in the Bisexual Community- Ell
Tues 28	Bisexuality and our jobs - Liz

JUNE

Tues 4	Alternative Healing - Ray Edwards (To be confirmed)
Tues 11	Video - John
Sun 16	PICNIC - Ellen. Venue to be announced
*Tues 18	Young Lesbian Group - Denise Worme (To be confirmed) Lesbian & Gay History - Michael (To be confirmed)
Tues 25	Stereotypes - good or bad? - Rachel Planning for Lesbian & Gay Pride March - Matt
Sat 29	Lesbian & Gay Pride March - details to be announced

JULY

Tues 2	Planning meeting for next programme
Tues 9	Video - John
*Tues 16	Separatism in the Lesbian & Gay Community -Ellen
Tues 23	Coming out to one's family - Liz
Tues 30	Bisexuality in long term relationships - Cris (a workshop for those in long term relationships) Mental Health & Bisexuality - Andy

Meetings are held in Heaven, Under the Arches, Villiers Street, Charing Cross, unless otherwise stated. Meet at 8pm to start at 8.30

**Women are particulary welcomed on the third Tuesday of each month.

On the first Sunday of the month we meet for the Tea Dance at Stallions, 1 Falconberg Court (Off Charing Cross Road opposite Centre Point) W1 from 5pm

Politics of Bisexuality Conference

Details

SECOND

POLITICS OF BISEXUALITY

CONFERENCE

13th and 14th APRIL, 1985

10am - 5pm

at the

LESBIAN AND GAY CENTRE

67-69 COWCROSS STREET

LONDON EC1M 6BP

(NEAREST TUBE - FARRINGDON)

weekend:- £2.50

(or £2.00 in advance)

one day:- £1.50

unwaged:- 50p (one or two days)

PLUS DAY MEMBERSHIP OF THE CENTRE

CRECHE AND ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE

DISABLED ACCESS

People will be at the centre on Friday 12th 6pm to 10pm to welcome people and arrange accommodation.

More details from:

BM/BI LONDON WC1N 3XX

Please make cheques or postal orders payable to the LONDON BISEXUAL GROUP OR L.B.G.

Programme

Friday 12th April
6pm - 10pm
Welcoming session for people from outside London and planning meeting

Saturday 13th April

10am Coffee
10.30 Non-Competitive Games
11am Introductory session

1pm Lunch
2pm Workshops
  i) Politics of Bisexuality (What's it all about?)
  ii) Defining Bisexuality (Role-play and discussion)
  iii) Producing a book-let about 'The Bisexual Experience)

3.30 Break
4pm Feed-back session
5pm Finish.

Sunday 14th April

10am Coffee
10.30 Workshops
  i) feminism and bisexuality
  ii) mental health and sexuality
  iii) S&M and bi-sexuality
  iv) A.I.D.S. and the media - 1985, a difficult year
  v) The Bi-monthly - London or national?

12.00 Feed-back session
1pm Lunch
2pm i) Towards a bisexual community
  ii) The manifesto
3.30 Break
4pm Where do we go from here?
5pm Finish

This is a provisional agenda. Suggestions for further topics of discussion will be welcome.

SIGMA is the support group for heterosexual people whose partners are homosexual, bisexual or have a sexual orientation that is different from their own.

SIGMA meet in London in the evening of the first Friday of each month and occasionally arrange weekend conferences. A newsletter is produced irregularly and distributed to members. There is a network of contacts around the country.

SIGMA can be contacted by writing with SAE to:

BM SIGMA
LONDON WC1 3XX

or by phoning 01-837 7324 (Gay Switchboard) who will give the telephone contact for the day.

PARTNERS ALWAYS WELCOME AT SIGMA MEETINGS.

Bi Groups Abroad

H. Bruns - Potthoff
Bleichstrausse 35
4900 Herford
WEST GERMANY

Melis Alliance
PO BOX 4755
Philadelphia
Pennsylvania 19137
USA.

Bi Club
PO BOX 797
2003 RT HAARLEM
The Netherlands.

San Fransisco Bi. Centre
1757 Hayes Street.
San Francisco
California 94177
USA.

THE BI-MONTHLY

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THE BI MONTHLY ORDER FORM

I enclose £ ____ cash / cheque / PO's payable to the LONDON BISEXUAL GROUP or L.B.G.

NAME ______________________________

ADDRESS ______________________________

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in this issue:- Bisexuals Banned

AIDS

Personal Experiences

Letters, News, Reviews

L.B.G. Programme